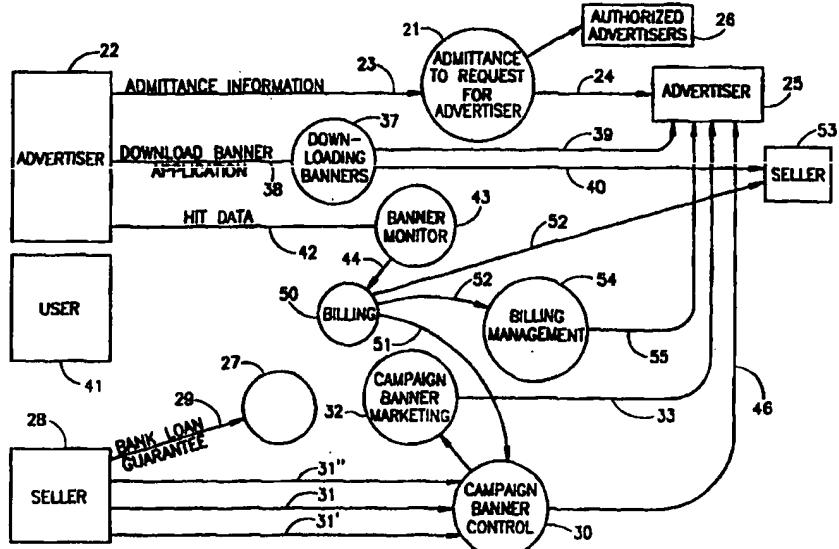




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(54) Title: ADVERTISING SYSTEM



(57) Abstract

An advertising method through the Internet that includes providing multitude campaign banners associated with sellers. Each banner is associated with a campaign budget related information and banner terms. There is further provided advertisers that select a desired banner and download the banner to the advertiser's site in the network. A client utilizes the campaign banner through the advertiser site and is thus linked to the seller's site. After being linked, the budget related information is updated according to the banner terms. In the case that the budget drops below a given threshold the campaign banner in the advertiser site is rendered inoperative.

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ADVERTISING SYSTEM

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is in the general field of advertising techniques particularly, but not necessarily, applicable over communication networks such as the Internet.

5

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The enormous growth in the use of public networks and in particular the Internet, encouraged many businesses to offer wide range of services accessible to the Internet users. From among the proposed services, the so 10 called electronic commerce appeared to be very promising. Electronic commerce encompasses all kind of buy/sell transactions and provision of information and other services having monetary value that are performed by utilizing the Internet.

The promising prospects of the electronic commerce stem from the 15 direct, immediate and the interactive nature of the communication between the seller and the buyer which circumvents intermediate parties and further due to the absence of expensive rental, salesmen and other overhead expenditures which are normally incurred in conventional commerce channels.

20 The expectations of rapid growth in the volume of electronic commerce had developed corresponding anticipations in respect of the advertising market over the Internet to the extent which, according to some analysts, could even jeopardize the dominance of conventional electronic media such as the television.

Whilst it is still a common premise that the electronic commerce will, eventually, grow to a very large scale, current trend show, unequivocally, that the actual growth rate does not meet the expectations and many companies which based their business plans on a very large growth rate presumption 5 encountered financial difficulties which in some case lead to bankruptcy.

The mild growth in the electronic commerce volume naturally slowed down the growth rate of the advertisement market, and many businesses have not crystallized clear policy as to whether investment in advertising through the public network and in particular the Internet is 10 commercially rentable. Specifically, many businesses are not in a position to evaluate whether the advertisement costs required for a running a given campaign are justified or exaggerated.

One possible factor that poses difficulty to companies who seek to advertise over the Internet insofar as assessing the rentability advertising, is 15 that unlike conventional advertising media such as commercial T.V, where only limited channels are available (say up to 20), in the Internet there are available multitude advertising channels, namely dozens of search engine utilities (e.g. Yahhoo, Alta-Vista etc.), dozens of news agencies sites (e.g. CNN), hundreds of virtual supermarket sites and others, all offering 20 advertising programs and provide their own terms. Moreover, unlike commercial T.V where there is an equitable index, i.e. rating for assessing the exposure rate of the media to the public, in the Internet such index is in many times defined by the advertising site owners and does not necessarily reflect how rentable is the advertisement for the client.

25 In fact, clients and advertisers may encounter similar problem in conventional advertising medium such as newspapers. Consider, for example, a given advertisement office being in charge on running a campaign for, say Coca Cola®. The office is likely to negotiate with leading newspapers having wide circulation on the campaign terms but will most

likely avoid negotiations with many other relatively small newspapers or magazines seeing that such burdensome negotiations are not beneficial in view of the limited circulation of each one of the specified newspapers or magazines. This may, of course, turn out to be mistake since one or more of 5 the specified small newspapers may demonstrate high performance notwithstanding its limited size.

Accordingly, there is a need in the art to provide for a new advertising system and method which, on the one hand, will afford benefiting from the advantages of advertising over public networks such as 10 the Internet (e.g. limited overhead), and, on the other hand, will provide a tool which enables sellers, users and advertiser to better evaluate the rentability of running a desired advertisement campaign in terms of costs and benefits (for sellers) and investments and profit (for advertisers) . The proposed solution should also enables sellers, users and advertiser who use 15 other advertisement media such as newspapers and magazines to better evaluate the rentability of running a desired advertisement campaign in terms of costs and benefits (for sellers) and investments and profit (for advertisers).

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

20 According to the invention, parties who are interested in advertising their products or services (hereinafter **SELLER**) generate a campaign banner that relates to the products or services. Each campaign banner is associated with at least a campaign banner budget related information and campaign banner terms.

25 The campaign banners are placed in campaign site or sites (controlled by **BIDDER**) which are accessible to parties who are interested in running the campaigns (hereinafter **ADVERTISERS**).

Potential advertisers who are interested in running a campaign access

the campaign site(s), review the proposed campaign banners that are associate with different sellers and decide according to (at least):

- (i) the campaign banner budget related information; and
- (ii) the campaign banner terms,

5 whether to commit and run a given campaign (or campaigns). Other decision criteria may be added, all as required and appropriate.

As will be explained in greater detail below the "decision" may involve, if desired, negotiation phase to agree on the terms for running the proposed campaign.

10 If desired, a preliminary admittance request session between the bidder and the advertiser is provided. By way of example, in such preliminary session the advertiser may provide general information such as the marketing niche in which he specializes in, fields which are not of interest for marketing, (due to moral or other reasons). An example of the 15 latter is a financial institute that is not interested in advertising sex related services.

By the same token, sellers and bidders may conduct a preliminary admittance request session where e.g. the sellers indicate their expectations from the advertisers etc.

20 Generally speaking, campaign terms define at least the actions that qualify to payment and the rate(s) associated with such action. The actions include, preferably, at least the number of so called true clicks by clients that are accomplished at the seller's site or sites due to the activity of the distributor. Other actions that may be specified in the terms are, for example, 25 commitment of client to purchase product or services. Of course, different rates may be associated with different actions. Thus, by way of example, the rate associated with actual purchase may be significantly higher than that associated with true click, since, obviously, from the standpoint of the seller, actual purchase is more rentable than true click. Other actions and their

associated rates may also be included in the terms.

After having committed to run a given campaign or campaigns, the advertiser normally incorporates the banner in its advertising site preferably (although not necessarily) by providing hyper-link through the banner to the 5 seller's site.

Now, clients can access the advertiser's site and exploit the campaign banner e.g. responsive to clicking the banner, linking to the seller's home page. The seller is debited by any use of the campaign banner (provided that it falls in the campaign terms - or portion thereof) according to the price tag 10 associated with the specified use, and the campaign banner budget related information is updated essentially in real time (e.g. in pre-defined intervals) so as to reflect the remaining budget.

The actual billing according to accumulated debts of the seller may be performed in a fully automatic, semi automatic or manual manner, all as 15 required and appropriate.

There is thus provided in accordance with the invention a method for advertising through communication network, comprising:

- (a) providing at least one campaign banner associated with respective seller; the banner being associated with at least campaign budget 20 related information and banner terms;
- (b) an advertiser selecting at least one banner and associating said banner to the advertiser site in the network
- (c) in response to a client utilizing the campaign banner through the advertiser site, linking the client to the seller's site;
- (d) updating the budget related information according to said banner 25 terms;
- (e) in the case that said budget drops below a given threshold, rendering the campaign banner in the advertiser site inoperative.

The invention further provides for a method for establishing an information exchange market over a communication network company:

- (i) providing campaign banners of sellers; the campaign banners are associated with at least campaign terms and optionally with campaign budget related information,
5
- (ii) advertisers downloading desired banner; and
- (iii) client exploit banners according to said terms, said terms can be updated dynamically.

10 The proposed advertising scheme of the invention provides, thus, significant advantages for the seller in that he/she can exploit the virtually overhead-free media, exploit numerous advertisers (i.e. all those that will download a banner) whilst obviating the burdensome procedure of addressing, separately, each potential advertiser, conducting prolonged
15 negotiation session therewith, conduct separate follow up in respect of each advertiser in order to ascertain whether the campaign carried by a specific advertiser is rentable, etc.

According to the proposed advertising scheme, the advertisers independently address the bidders and decide whether they are interested in
20 running a campaign for the specified seller and obviate the seller from approaching them for conducting a burdensome negotiation.

The proposed advertising scheme likewise offers significant advantages to the advertisers who can review proposed campaign banners, evaluate whether it is of interest to them according to the campaign budget related
25 information and the specified terms.

Yet another very significant advantage is the dynamic nature of the proposed scheme which enables both to the seller and the advertisers to re-evaluate their considerations. Thus, by way of example, by virtue of the virtually real-time update of the budget related information, an advertiser can

decide if he is interested in running or continue to run a banner campaign, and likewise the seller can change the rates and/or the terms according to the actual behavior of the advertisers and/or the clients. More specifically, according to this example, if the rate of exploitation of the budget is 5 insufficient, the seller can contact the bidder for e.g. increasing the proposed rates and/or alleviating the terms, thereby rendering the proposed campaign banner more appealing for advertisers and/or clients.

In fact, the proposed scheme provide a new information exchange market where sellers and advertisers establish advertising relations according 10 to demand and offer terms.

Whilst the description above focused predominantly on applications over the Internet, the invention is by no means bound by this particular example. Consider, for example, an interactive cable T.V. where advertisements (associated with sellers) are presented to viewers who view an 15 on-demand motion film. In interactive cable T.V., the viewers are able to input data in response to data presented on the screen using the remote control unit. Thus, upon presenting a given advertisement, the viewer can key-in a given code using the remote control unit and in response various actions may occur, e.g. linking to the seller's site, getting additional information about the 20 advertised product, and/or others, all as required and appropriate.

By this particular example the banner with the specified advertisement is found at a bidder site and is associated with campaign banner terms and budget in the manner specified. The banner is downloaded from a bidder site by the advertiser (the Cable T.V. company) who incorporates the 25 advertisement in the specified on-demand movie. The advertiser is credited in accordance with the actions as stipulated in the banner terms. For example, any code keyed-in by a spectator which gives rise to a link to the seller's site using the cable T.V. (or to other source of information associated with the seller) will result in debiting the seller and crediting the advertiser, as agreed

upon in the banner terms.

Another non-limiting example relates to conventional printed media, say newspapers. Thus, a banner (say Coca Cola® campaign) is published in newspaper. The banner prescribes the terms and any advertiser can download 5 the campaign banner and exploit it according to the prescribed terms. By this particular example any advertiser who runs the campaign is provided with a unique identifier in order to identify actions associated therewith and for which the specified advertiser should be credited. Reverting now to the Coca Cola® example, consider for example that the terms stipulate amongst the 10 other, that the advertiser will benefit from a given commission for any consumer who orders through said advertiser at least 6 Coca Cola® bottles.

The advertiser now exploits the banner and publishes the Coca Cola® campaign specifying the advertiser's unique identifier. Any consumer who reads the advertisement in the advertiser's newspaper and who decides to 15 purchase 6 Coca Cola® bottles (or more) calls a given telephone number (associated with the bidder), feeds in the identification code of the advertiser and orders the 6 Coca Cola® bottles.

The bidder can now credit the advertiser (according to the advertiser's id) and debit the seller accordingly. Obviously due to the off-line nature of the 20 advertisement medium, the total budget associated with this particular banner campaign cannot be updated dynamically.

Accordingly, the invention further provides for a method for advertising through an advertising media, comprising:

- 25 (f) providing at least one campaign banner associated with respective seller; the banner being associated with at least banner terms;
- (g) an advertiser selecting at least one banner and associating said banner to the advertiser;
- (h) the client utilizing the campaign banner through the advertiser.

The invention further provides a storage medium storing data for

accomplishing the advertising system and method of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS:

For a better understanding, the invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

5 **Fig. 1** is a schematic illustration of a generalized system of the invention;
and
Fig. 2 is a generalized data flow diagram (DFD) which illustrated a general processes in a system and method according to one embodiment of the invention.

10

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

There follows now a description that relates to a specific application over the Internet. The invention is by no means bound by this particular application.

15 **Fig. 1** illustrates a schematically a generalized system in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. The network 1 interlinks a plurality of seller stations of which only two are shown (2 and 4, respectively). Each seller station is associated with a seller site. Network 1 further links plurality of client stations of which only two are shown (6 and 8, respectively). Each 20 client station is associated with a client site. Network 1 further links bidder station 10 that is associated with a bidder site. Similarly, network 1 further links advertiser station 12 that is associated with an advertiser site and a billing station 14. The station may be for example a conventional P.C.

Fig. 1 illustrates one of many possible architecture variants. Thus, by 25 way of non-limiting example, each party (e.g. seller) is not necessarily represented as one station and, is, likewise, not necessarily associated with

only one site.

It should be noted that whilst, for simplicity, the description predominantly focuses on an advertising system over the Internet network utilizing, obviously, Internet facilities (i.e. internet sites and protocols), it 5 should be noted that the invention is by no means bound by this specific example. Thus, for example, Network (1) may represent a network capable of interlinking stations (such as P.C.) that are capable of communicating with sites over the network as is in the Internet. The network may further (or instead) link T.V. client sites receiving (and possibly transmitting – i.e. 10 interactive T.V.) T.V. transmissions through multitude channels. Accordingly, the client/advertiser/seller and campaign bidder can utilize the advertising system of the invention over internet channels and/or TV channels.

In its broadest aspect, the advertising system may be used for any type information or channel that is preferably, but not necessarily, supported by a 15 communication network. The client, advertiser, seller, and bidder may be realized on any site supported by the network.

Before proceeding any further, there follows a brief example that will assist in clarifying the general scheme as explained above. Consider, for example, two sellers (hereinafter seller A and seller B) that wish to 20 lodge a campaign in order to increase the number of visitors in their respective site.

The first seller is willing to allocate \$ 100,000 for the campaign and the campaign banner terms stipulate that each true click (i.e. client who is linked to the seller site through the advertiser's site) is worth 50 cents.

25 The second seller, in its turn, is willing to allocate \$ 500,000 for the campaign and the campaign banner terms stipulate that each true click (i.e. client who is linked to the seller site through the advertiser's site) is worth \$ 1. Moreover, any true link that will lead to actual purchase from the seller's site will award the advertiser with 1% commission of the purchase value. (By this

now limiting this example, the terms stipulate, in addition to true click rate, also actual purchase rate).

After preparing the respective campaign banners such that they duly reflect the campaign banner budget and the campaign terms, the banners are 5 placed at the campaign site of the bidder.

An advertiser, e.g. the CNN channel reviews the proposed campaign banners at the bidder site and decides to run the campaign that belongs to seller B. Considering, for example, that the campaign is very successful and that many true clicks are activated by clients that visit the advertiser's (CNN 10 channel) site, the budget associated information is updated virtually in real-time including, of course, updating the remaining budget. Thus, if 100,000 true clicks have been encountered in the first week, the banner budget appearing in the campaign site will be updated to 400,000 \$.

Any new advertiser reviewing the campaign banner at the bidder site 15 can evaluate the parameters of the proposed banners and decides if he is interested in downloading and running the campaign under question. Thus, if seller A for example, realizes that his banner is not utilized for a relatively prolonged period (e.g. true clicks are not accomplished), he should, preferably, take appropriate steps in order to render its banner more 20 appealing, e.g. by increasing the banner budget and/or alleviating the terms.

One example being e.g. increasing the rate per true click, say, from 50 cents to 75 cents. The latter example illustrates the dynamic nature of the proposed advertising scheme which effectively constitute information exchange market where at least one of client, seller, advertiser and bidder can change their 25 behavior according to performance.

An important factor by this aspect of the invention is the fact that upon exhaustion of the budget, the campaign banner ceases to exist. Thus should CNN channel exhaust all or most of the \$500,000 budget, the campaign banner is rendered inoperative by preferably sending an appropriate signal

from the bidder to the advertiser. The latter advantage is, of course, not applicable in the case the off-line media is used, e.g. newspapers.

It should be noted that budget related information may include in addition to budget total also other information such as, e.g., a graph 5 illustrating the rate of budget exploitation over a specified period of time.

Having described in general one non-limiting example of an advertising system of the invention, attention is now directed to Fig. 2 showing a generalized data flow diagram (DFD) which illustrates general processes in an advertising system and method according to one embodiment of the 10 invention.

As shown, in a first process (21), the bidder receives admittance applications from advertisers (22) who provide admittance information (23) such as e.g. target sellers of interest, advertising capacity (e.g. clients that are exposed to the advertiser) and/or others. The bidder analyses the admittance 15 information, decides whether or not to approve the application, and informs the same (24) to the advertiser (25). The list of authorized advertisers is stored in authorized advertisers file (26).

A similar process (designated generally as (27)) is handled in respect of seller sites (28) and is therefore not expounded upon herein. Note, that for 20 sellers, the bidder may require a bank guarantee (29) for securing settlement of the seller's undertaking as reflected in the banner budget and terms.

Turning now to campaign banner control process (30) (performed by the bidder), it receives, amongst others, information about new campaign banners (31) from sellers (28), which include, of course, campaign budget related 25 information and the campaign terms (and possibly others). Although not shown in Fig. 2, the specified process may include a preliminary negotiation cycle where the bidder and the seller negotiate e.g. about the sum of the campaign banner budget. As shown in Fig. 2, process (30) may also handle input aimed at modifying the campaign banner information (31'), e.g. seller

wishes to increase the rate per true click (campaign banner terms) after having realized that the current terms are not sufficiently appealing for advertisers to carry out its campaign. If desired, campaign banners may be simply deleted (31'') in response to appropriate instruction from sellers,

5 Having accepted proposed banners and placed them at the bidder's site, the latter may invoke a campaign banner sub-process for marketing new campaign banners (32) i.e. notifying potential advertisers (33) that may be interested in carrying out the new campaign banner. The information as to advertisers of interest may be provided to the marketing sub-process from file 10 (26) which, as specified above, includes information about preferences of the advertises.

Having placed the banners in the bidder's site, an advertiser may now download banners (37) by issuing appropriate application (38) and receiving the requested banner (39). The banner is normally downloaded to the 15 advertiser along with terms (40).

Now, when users (41) utilize the campaign banner (e.g. access the seller site through the advertiser site), the advertiser (22) informs the same (42) to banner monitor process (43) which informs (44) billing process (45). The latter will inform the campaign banner control process (30) responsive to 20 which it will duly update the budget associated information that pertain to the specified banner (i.e. update the balance and, if desired, provide graph that illustrate the budget balance over time). If the remaining budget drops below specified amount, process (30) will notify on the same (46) to the advertisers (25) that exploit the banner and will effectively render the campaign banner 25 inoperative.

Billing module (50) utilizes the data (accumulated in the banner monitor (43)) that is provided thereto (44) for calculating the sum that the seller should be debited (and the advertiser credited), and updates (51) process (30) accordingly. The latter uses the specified information for real-time update of

the budget-related information.

Reverting now to billing module (50), it issues debit notes (52) to the appropriate seller (53) (who issued the banner under consideration) and further provides the specified data (52) to billing management module (54)

5 who handles the actual payments (55) to the credited advertisers (25). As specified before, the whole billing processes (by this particular embodiment

modules (50) and (54)) may be realized in a fully automatic manner (utilizing known per-se authentication and security measures), semi-automatic or manual manner. It should be noted that the various processes depicted in Fig.

10 2 may be implemented in any desired hardware infrastructure (e.g. stand alone or network) and software implementation (e.g. parallel processing and/or breaking to sub-modules all as required and appropriate).

Those versed in the art will readily appreciate that the specific example given with reference to Fig. 2 is by no means biding. Thus, one or more of

15 the specified processes and/or input and/or output data may be modified, deleted and/or others may be added, all as required and appropriate depending upon the particular application. By way of no limiting example, the entire process of advertiser admittance application may be skipped or combined to the following downloading banner process. By way of another non limiting

20 example the parameters may be changed, e.g. in the advertiser admittance application the latter may specify characteristics of sellers that are not of interest. By yet another non-limiting example, budget related information may include not only the budget balance, but also graphic representation of the budget change over time. Other variants and modifications are, of course,

25 applicable.

The description with reference to Fig. 2, applied *mutatis mutandis* also to other media such as interactive T.V. and to off line newspapers. The latter is of course devoid of the capability to process and display real-time information.

It should be noted that the order of steps stipulated in the description and the appended claims should not necessarily be construed as binding.

The present invention has been described with a certain degree of particularity but it should be understood that various modifications and 5 alterations may be made without departing from the scope or spirit of the invention as defined by the following claims:

CLAIMS:

1. A method for advertising through communication network, comprising:

- 5 (a) providing at least one campaign banner associated with respective seller; the banner being associated with at least campaign budget related information and banner terms;
- (b) an advertiser selecting at least one banner and associating said banner to the advertiser site in the network;
- 10 (c) in response to a client utilizing the campaign banner through the advertiser site, linking the client to the seller's site;
- (d) updating the budget related information according to said banner terms;
- (e) in the case that said budget drops below a given threshold, 15 rendering the campaign banner in the advertiser site inoperative.

2. The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of applying preliminary admittance request of either or both of said seller and advertiser.

20

3. The method according to Claim 1, wherein said step (b) further comprising: the seller and the advertiser negotiating in order to agree upon said terms.

25

4. The method according to claim 1, wherein said budget terms include true click rate.

5. The method according to Claim 1, wherein said terms further include purchase rate and wherein said method further comprises the steps (e'); the client committing a purchase and in response thereto (e"), updating the budget, according to said banner terms.

5

6. The method according to Claim 1, wherein said communication network being the Internet.

7. The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of billing 10 the seller according to rates associated with actions performed by said seller as stipulated in said terms.

8. The method according to Claim 1, wherein said terms or portion thereof are updated dynamically.

15

9. A method for establishing an information exchange market over a communication network comprising:

20

- (i) providing campaign banners of sellers; the campaign banners are associated with at least campaign terms and campaign budget related information,
- (ii) advertisers downloading desired banner; and
- (iii) client exploit banners according to said terms, said terms can be updated dynamically.

10. For use in the method of claim 1, said steps (a).

25 11. For use in the method of claim 1 to 9, said steps (b).

12. For use in the method of claim 1, said steps (c).

13. For use in the method of claim 1, said steps (d) and (e).

14. A method for advertising through an advertising media, comprising:

(a) providing at least one campaign banner associated with respective seller; the banner being associated with at least banner terms;

5 (b) an advertiser selecting at least one banner and associating said banner to the advertiser;

(c) the client utilizing the campaign banner through the advertiser;

15. The method according to Claim 14, wherein said advertising media being an off-line advertising media.

10 16. The method according to Claim 15, wherein said advertising media being a newspaper or magazine.

17. The method according Claim 1, wherein said communication network being an Interactive T.V. infrastructure.

18. The method according Claim 14, wherein said advertising media 15 being an Interactive T.V.

19. The method according Claim 14, wherein said advertising media being the Internet.

20. A method for establishing an information exchange market over an advertising media, comprising:

20 (i) providing campaign banners of sellers; the campaign banners are associated with at least campaign terms;

(ii) advertisers downloading desired banner; and

(iii) client exploit banners according to said terms.

21. A storage media holding data accessible to the advertising method steps 25 of Claim 1.

22. A storage media holding data accessible to the advertising method steps of Claim 9.

23. A storage media holding data accessible to the advertising method steps of Claim 14.

24. A storage media holding data accessible to the advertising method steps of Claim 20.

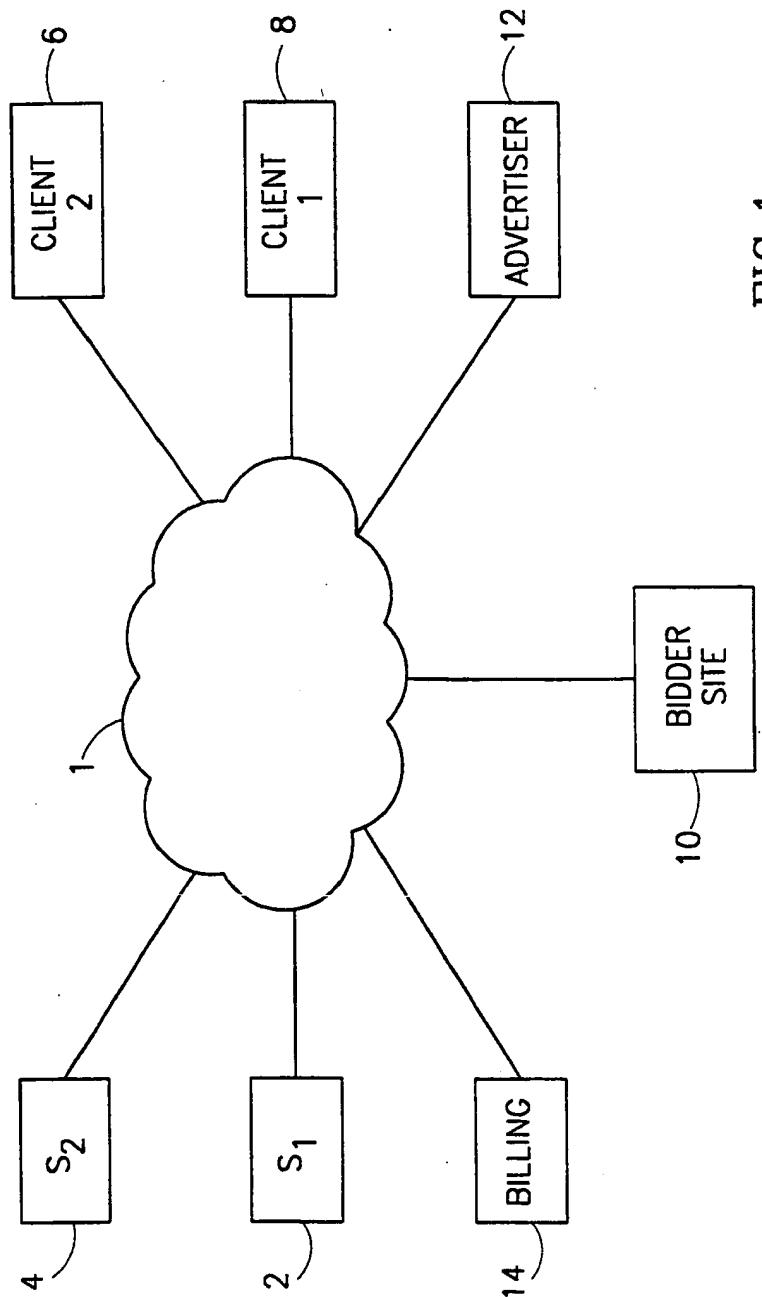


FIG. 1

2/2

